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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies project-based curriculum elements to increase postsecondary students' sense of political efficacy and their political interest, knowledge, and participation. It evaluates factors correlated with low levels of voting and the implementation of registration activities as remedies; it then introduces curriculum elements based on research to increase the quality and quantity of political participation among the State of Georgia's postsecondary students, including interest group organization and electoral strategies as well as problem identification and analysis. Data and analysis of recent Georgia elections are presented which demonstrate the potential influence that young voters may wield if they unify around common objectives and coordinate their registration and voting activities to influence specific primary and general elections. It is suggested that current voter registration efforts are inadequate and may be improved among students by in-class activities in political science classes. Students also need to learn how to analyze and evaluate public problems, proposed remedies, and their potential consequences and underlying values. Teaching political education using federalism as a central organizing concept is also recommended, and postsecondary institutions are recommended as especially fruitful sources for instilling political responsibility in young voters. Inclusion of a project-based curricular strategy in postsecondary political science classes may result in more effective and higher quality political participation among these young citizens. A theoretical, basic outline for such a project is suggested. (Contains 45 references.) (Author/NAV)

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Teaching Democracy as A "Practical" Science: Reorganizing the Curriculum at Institutions of Higher Education for Active Citizenship

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Abstract

This paper identifies project-based curriculum elements to increase post secondary students' sense of political efficacy and their political interest, knowledge, and participation. Initially, it discusses factors correlated with low levels of voting and the implementation of registration activities as remedies. The paper then introduces curriculum elements based on research to increase the quality and quantity of political participation among Georgia's post secondary students, including interest group organization and electoral strategies, and problem identification and analysis. Finally, it presents data and analysis of recent Georgia elections which demonstrate the potential influence young voters may wield if they unify around common objectives and coordinate their registration and voting activities to influence specific primary and general elections.

Teaching Democracy as A 'Practical' Science: Reorganizing the Curriculum at Institutions of Higher Education for Active Citizenship

This paper was conceived primarily to address young students' low sense of political efficacy and inadequate levels of political interest, knowledge, and participation (Avey, 1989, p. 33; Kettering Foundation, 1993; Teixeira, 1992, p. 77), by addressing the impact their collective voices and votes may have on elections if they organize to participate. Political scientists have long asserted that voters' sense of political efficacy significantly impacts their levels of political participation (Koch, 1995; pp. 88-89; Schwartz [1973] cited in Newmann, [1975], p. 50). The author of this paper has become more aware of students' feelings of political inefficacy after teaching political science in various post-secondary educational settings. Furthermore, political and sociological theorists have implied that interest group organization can enhance a member's sense of efficacy, collective responsibility, and solidarity, and thus, promote greater levels of participation (Fleishman, 1980; Klandermans, 1984; Koch, 1995; Piven & Cloward, 1985). It may be reasonable to hypothesize that increasing students' sense of influence may motivate them to study more diligently political issues, processes, structures, and democratic values since their school political activities may impact their future and fulfill sociopsychological needs (see Newmann, 1975, pp. 28-36 and 46-54, on his review of research on moral agency, psychological needs, and democratic participation).

To test these ideas, however, political science courses will have to be restructured to emphasize student influence through interest group and electoral activity. This paper probes these issues. It is a start, not a blueprint for action. It aims to identify areas for research and innovation, rather than to dictate a particular curriculum.

The paper begins by suggesting that current registration efforts to increase voter participation are inadequate. It then describes some student characteristics that correlate with nonvoting and that may shed light on how to improve voter participation among these citizens. Several elements of curricular innovation and their rationale are described next, followed by an example data set of recent elections and institutional populations which demonstrate the potential for student political influence in Georgia.

Registration and Voting

Both federal and state governments have attempted to improve voter participation. The Georgia Secretary of State's Office organized a voter registration drive to increase the levels of voting in the 1994 elections (W. Perry [personal communication, September 1, 1994])[1]. This activity followed a nation-wide movement which culminated in the passage of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (PL 103-31, May 20, 1993). Both activities may have been based on political scientists' reports that large percentages of citizens who register to vote in presidential elections actually vote (Piven & Cloward, 1985, p. 582), and or on partisan advantage gained by the Democratic Party's candidates when larger numbers of voters participate in elections.

Voter registration, alone, may not provide the impetus for citizens--particularly young voters--to vote in primary or general elections (Avey, 1989; Teixeira, 1992). Teixeira (1992), for instance, has demonstrated that reducing registration hurdles could plausibly raise voter

[1]William Perry was an assistant director of the 1994 Georgia voter registration project--labelled "Outreach"--in the Georgia Secretary of State's Elections Office. Dr. Grady Cornish, Deputy Director of Elections in Georgia and head of the voter project, Outreach, suggested that the registration drive was one of two phases (G. Cornish[personal communication, September 2, 1994]).

participation by only 7 percent (p. 148). Low voter turnout in both the 1994 elections and recent Georgia presidential primaries suggests that registration drives are not particularly effective in increasing voter turnout. Voting statistics from recent local general and primary elections in Athens-Clarke County demonstrate low voter turnout among young citizens (Appendix: Table 1)[2]. State-wide voter statistics in Georgia demonstrate similar low levels of voting.[3] Moreover, efforts to induce more citizens to vote through early registration strategies does not address other significant underlying causes of nonvoting, such as an individual's perceived lack of influence over desired political outcomes, insufficient substantive reasons to vote, lack of anticipated benefits, and or responsiveness of government representatives to individual voters. Therefore, low voter turnout remains a problem to be addressed, especially if one accepts the assumption that voting provides a mechanism to influence election outcomes, and that elections provide

[2]Georgia primary elections are as significant an indicator of voter participation as general elections since the Democratic Party primary contest is the *de facto* election in many if not most districts, though this is rapidly changing based on recent Republican gains. In the July 21, 1992, general primary, less than half of all registered voters in Athens-Clarke County's 20 precincts voted and in only two of the 20 precincts did the registered voter turnout exceed 50% --50.08% (5-A) and 51.8% (7-C). A significant element of the registration drive may need to include educating potential voters of the importance primaries serve in one party or uncompetitive districts (data from Athens-Clarke County Board of Elections Office).

[3]In the 1992 presidential general election, the percentage of registered voters in Athens-Clarke County who voted was 73.2%. (The disparity between this figure and the one stated in Table 1 may reflect the inclusion of absentee ballots.) Across the state, however, the percentage of Georgians voting ranged from a low of 45.9% (Wheeler County), 49.2% (Seminole), and 56.6% (Atkinson) to a high of 82.4% (Fayette), 80.6% (Oconee), 80.2% (Dawson), and 79.8% (Gwinnett). The majority of Georgia counties fell between 60 and 79 percent of registered voters who went to the polls. Percentages of Georgians registered and voting among those of voting age declined significantly in midterm elections. For example, only 39% of Hancock County's registered voters actually did so in the 1990 general election (The Georgia County Guide 1993, pp. 77-78).

choices which address the interests of large numbers of nonvoters. Carter (1992), among others, has demonstrated that this assumption is not always valid.

Political scientists have long studied voter characteristics and behavior. Variables, aside from institutional barriers such as registration, associated with voter turnout include: income, education, type of occupation, race, age, residential stability, marital status, political and substantive knowledge, organizational membership or participation, political party programmatic and recruitment strategies, perceived benefits and costs attributed to participation, strength of party identification, and sense of political efficacy (Anderson & Davidson, 1943, p.21; Avey, 1989; Burns, *et al.*, 1993, pp. 231, 236, 239, 264-265; Downs, 1957; Lipset, 1981, p. 189; Teixeira, 1992; Wielhouwer, 1994). Several of these demographic variables are interrelated and have not clearly shown causality; none allow for the type of intervention discussed here to improve levels of voting participation (e.g., income, race, and type of occupation).

Contrasts between Georgia counties with the lowest percentages of registered voters who voted to those counties with the highest percentages, illustrates that several correlates of nonvoting mentioned above may be much more important than registration hurdles in conditioning voting behavior among Georgia citizens.[4] The particularly noteworthy relationship

[4]Georgia counties with the highest percentage of voter participation to registration ratios in the 1992 and 1994 general elections were also well above the state averages in significant factors political scientists associate with high levels of voting. (The single exception was in Dawson County, where the incumbent, State Senator John Foster, had engendered particularly hostile voter feelings and faced a campaign of organized opposition by the Georgia Association of Educators. See Charles Bulloch's The Georgia Political Almanac: The General Assembly, 1993, p. S-39.) For instance, the state's per capita income mean was $17,045 in 1990; Fayette's, $23,311; Gwinnett's, $19,861; Wheeler's, 10,989; Seminole's, 12,863; Atkinson's, $13,507; Oconee, another apparent oddity when comparing income and voting, encompasses twice the state average of advanced degreed employees--the result of its proximity to The University of

between wealth and participation and influence needs little elaboration here. Not only do citizens with greater wealth participate more than others, they can also more readily influence the public agenda through media message control, election finance, and access to officeholders. Contrarily, interrelated factors such as race and lower levels of income, and their relationship to depressed levels of participation are well known. Importantly for this paper's purposes, however, these variables do not lend themselves to change by educational institutions.

On the other hand some variables related to this curriculum proposal may provide opportunities to improve political participation. For instance, perceived economic utility (benefits), and group membership or psychological attachment may increase the probability of participation. Downs (1957) posits a rational model of voter participation based on individual perception of party differentials on relevant issues, estimation of whether the individual's vote has a decisive impact (i.e., estimation of how others will participate), and cost of participation. Accordingly, if Downs' theory is applied to the curriculum elements recommended here, successful efforts by students to organize around an issue and identify an electoral strategy to exploit their aggregate votes may raise their participation rates. Even if the students cannot come to a consensus, the simulated activity might reduce present and future costs of political initiation and education. Too, if political education includes teaching students skills to analyze issues in a more effective and efficient manner, this also might simplify and thus reduce costs of participation.

Sociologists have also explored social-psychological variables associated with individual

Georgia (The Georgia County Guide 1993, pp. 44-45, 67-70).

participation in collective action. Fleishman (1980) studied college students' feelings of responsibility and contributions toward the public good, specifically helping the needy. Increased feelings of responsibility occurred if individuals felt their actions had a significant impact on the group's welfare and the public good could be measured in discrete units. Estimated impact was based on "surplus resources," that is the "difference between the amount others contribute and the minimum amount needed to provide the public good" (p. 631). The relationship between helping behavior and surplus resource estimates was curvilinear. In other words, feelings of responsibility declined at the two extremes of surplus resource estimation. From this study, Fleishman (1980) concluded that "extra-economic considerations [i.e., altruism] do exert a systematic influence on collective action" (p. 637).

Klandermans (1984) has also conducted research in social-psychological theories of resource mobilization and participation and found that various structural factors--individuals situated in social networks, the rationality of social movement participation, and participant access to resources--affect individual decisions to participate in social movements (p. 583). More specifically, he outlined an expectancy-value theory of participation which includes individual evaluations of expected outcomes of movements and the value of those outcomes. Klandermans' (1984) results confirmed Fleishman's findings with respect to responsibility, and contradicted Olson's (1990) selective incentives as a necessary factor in inducing participation. Moreover, Klandermans' (1984) study confirmed other's findings that feelings of solidarity and responsibility were more important than reward incentives (p. 591).

These social-psychological theories suggest that students may find group participation desirable, in spite of the lack of economic incentives. Fleishman's (1980) findings would

indicate that students may identify issues around which to organize and plan electoral strategies which do not reflect individual self-interest. Merely seeing that their aggregate votes may provide electoral victory and that these efforts might lead to achieving positive social goals (e.g., environmental safety) may motivate them to participate more readily. Students attending post secondary institutions are favorably situated to develop social networks described by Fleishman (1980) which also was shown to increase their willingness to participate.

These admittedly few examples suggest that political science instructors may be able to influence certain factors to increase political participation among students through in-class activities. The following section details other reasons to revise the current political education curriculum.

Curriculum Innovation

Interest Group Politics: Getting Beyond Constitutions and Memorization

The roots of the following recommendation to revise political education come from the fields of political science, education, and personal professional experiences as mentioned earlier. Truman (1971) has described the unfortunate overemphasis given to research in political constitutions and formal institutions by political scientists before and after World War II, and the need to focus more on the study of informal institutions like interest groups (xiii-xix). Koch (1995) has emphasized the role that interest group activity plays in "connect[ing] the individual to the complex and distant world of politics." (p. 4) His research demonstrates the link between a group member's identification with and interdependence on a group and his or her increased sense of political efficacy and information assimilation. Examples like these demonstrate the growing influence behavioralism has had and is having in political science and the need to infuse

the curriculum with interest group activity as part of these new understandings.

While political education now focuses to some degree on informal institutions, this has not occurred without resistance. In fact, a review by this author of introductory political science syllabi from all regions of the country, and of mainstream textbooks, indicates that the emphasis on formal institutions is alive and well. Also, Hershey's (1991) review of introductory political science syllabi provides evidence that much of post secondary political education continues to stress memorization of facts regarding "institutions, forms of behavior, and polices" (p. 4). The textbooks used reflect this traditional approach as well. Hershey (1991) further disparages current courses for their duplication of high school civics, and suggests that it is time to situate political learning in the context of a conceptual schema. For example, she asserts that "[e]ducators have long told us that lectures are best used to teach concepts, not facts. Granted, legislative term lengths can be related to several important concepts. But its utility, then, derives from the teaching of those concepts." (p. 7)

Professional educators too have weighed in on the side of curricular reform. Glickman (in press) describes today's school characteristics as outdated as the" Model T car" (p. 45). And though his comments are directed primarily at K-12 curricular requirements and other educational areas, they have import for post secondary schools. State legislation which requires that students be competent merely in national and state political constitutions demonstrates the gap between Truman's and Koch's insights and curriculum constraints policy makers impose on the political curriculum. Furthermore, Glickman (in press) derides the legitimacy given to multiple choice and paper and pencil tests, asserting that they "have little correlation with achievements in adult life" (p. 55). Moreover, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) report that

students who are required to "construct knowledge" and "present a product or performance, or take some action for an audience beyond the teacher, classroom, and school building" make achievement gains over those in more traditional learning situations (pp. 13-16).

Other educational researchers have explored curriculum strategies that improve political competence, though primarily at the secondary level. Newmann (1975), for example, describes the need to educate for "environmental competence". He defines environmental competence as "the ability to act in accordance with the intentions one has for making an impact in the environment external to oneself" (p. 16). His curriculum revolves around improving a citizen's ability to influence public affairs. Several of his curricular reforms applicable to improving student environmental competence for post secondary students include: increased opportunities for student choice of courses and course topics; increased attention to and instruction in thinking skills and values analysis (from the student's perspective, not disciplinary expert's); and greater time spent evaluating social issues (pp. 20-27).

Significantly, Newmann (1975) emphasizes the lack of success that instruction devoted to issue analysis or analytic skills will achieve unless students are aided in understanding how to implement their beliefs (p. 24). It is also intriguing that the great majority of American citizens do not think that they could influence what the government decided, or even more astonishingly, that they think government leaders might hurt them if they attempted to influence public decisions (p. 50; see also Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, p. 8). Newmann (1975) suggests requiring "social action" projects as a viable option to help teach citizens influence skills. He highlights the crucial impact of group aggregation; organization, unity, and maintenance on environmental competence (pp. 54-55, 89-91). Newmann (1975) alludes to the unfortunate reality that "a myth

of individual action" is taught as the "model of citizenship participation" even though "group action is usually more effective" (p. 89). Others (Fleishman, 1980; Klandermans, 1984; Koch, 1995; McFarland, 1984; Olson, 1990; Truman, 1971) have written about the effectiveness of group action as well as described its limitations.

Conrad and Hedin (1977) have also illustrated alternative curricular activities which illustrate a greater commitment to the demonstration of successful political competence and participation. For example, they describe anecdotal evidence that students can affect their environment through school based projects. After having been elected to a local committee for youth affairs, two students celebrated their "newly found confidence and competence in working with influential adults in their city" by successfully lobbying the city council to overturn an ordinance that prohibited youth from using local recreational facilities and "by establish[ing] a city-wide job bank" (p. 48). This example is supported by a growing body of research which demonstrates that young adults are cognitively capable of participating in public decisionmaking and that their intellectual, psychological, ethical, and personal development is stunted when not included in participatory activities (Conrad & Hedin, 1977, pp. 57-58).

Significant findings from citizenship surveys produced by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (in Conrad & Hedin, 1977) also confirm that developmental learning requires "*significant experience*" intertwined with "*careful reflection*" (p. 58). Significant experiences and reflection may be achieved through a variety of activities but importantly for this paper's ideas, Conrad and Hedin (1977) recommend that students "join an active citizen organization" or "form ... research and lobby groups around a particular issue" (pp. 63-65). They suggest that traditional avenues of involvement including working political campaigns or

attending political party meetings "seldom brings them [students] close to the real mechanisms of public policy-making or gives them either skills or experience in influencing community decisions" (p. 63). Self-initiated organizational activities, in contrast, should enable students to learn effective political skills and gain a sense of political efficacy (p. 65).

The theories and rationales described earlier provide support for the first curriculum innovation proposed here: interest group organization and election activity simulations. Since interest group activity is an integral part of effective political behavior, it should be considered as an important activity included in political education. Even more, since young citizens in general lack other important means to influence elections (e.g., money, access to officeholders, *de facto* legal recourse), these skills are especially important to boost their feelings of political efficacy and to help them demonstrate environmental competence. This simulation activity would also provide opportunities for students to apply and reflect on political organization theories and analytic concepts. For instance, concepts in Truman's (1971) discourse--group cohesion, overlapping membership, cross cutting issues, and potential publics--could all be readily learned and internalized for later use after an interest group consensus building activity.

Issue Analysis, Thinking Skills, and Democratic Decisionmaking

Students need to learn more than interest group organization and electoral skills to participate effectively. Important political citizenship skills, for voting or other activities, also include analyzing and evaluating public problems, proposed remedies, their potential consequences and underlying values. Intelligent and effective political participation requires that citizens hone such skills as issue analysis, thinking strategies, and values identification and clarification among others. Unfortunately, a recent study by West (1994) concluded that teaching higher

order thinking skills in a one semester political science course was unachievable. More specifically, she concluded that direct teaching of such skills (i.e., "explicit model of critical thinking") was too time consuming. West (1994) described an alternative method, which required students to perform in highly interactive environmental situations and to complete different types of assignments such as role play, small group dialogue, Socratic questioning, and short written assignments. Though West's (1994) results may have been tainted by methodological limitations, other educators have recognized the value of interactive and cooperative learning (Slavin, 1989, cited in VanSickle & Hoge, 1991).

Nevertheless, educators have emphasized the democratic imperative for citizens to learn good decisionmaking skills, and have contributed to our understanding of how to achieve more thoughtful decision making. Newmann (1975) asserts that citizens can identify alternatives considered in decision making including "criteria for the process of argument as well as for the substantive values on which arguments are grounded." He suggests that individuals can learn to identify a hierarchy of values they subscribe to, clarify definitions that at first appear contradictory, and evaluate reasons upon which to judge policy options (p. 80). Baron (1991) has described the substantial degree of individual differences in constructing thoughts based on competing beliefs about thinking, the limitations on formal logic, stages of moral development, and general beliefs about the importance of reflection. He elaborates a metacognitive framework to help improve deficient thinking. Stein and Miller (1991) have constructed rhetorical, verbal, and "real world" argumentation models and have outlined an hierarchy of reasoning based on achieving elements of rhetorical argument which culminate in empathetic attitudes towards others' viewpoints--an important element in our pluralistic democratic society. Lawrence (1991)

has studied the adverse effects on thinking with implications for the adequacy of lecture methods versus interactive lessons and activities.

Social studies educators have addressed other ideas to improve reasoning skills and decision making. Newmann's (1991) research has demonstrated multiple approaches to teaching thinking and potential outcomes of a general framework for achieving higher order thinking. Oliver and Shaver (1966) have illuminated the conflictual nature of values underlying public issues and a valuable framework (i.e., Constitutional principles and substantive goals, clarifying factual claims and word meanings [p. 89]) in which to evaluate and weigh alternative solutions to problems and their estimated outcomes. Shaver and Strong (1976) have described the need to help students identify conflicting values--esthetic, instrumental, and moral--in decisionmaking within the framework of a democratic ideology. Shaver and Larkins (1973) have described various elements of public decision making and psychological states to help citizens make better decisions such as identifying value standards to evaluate ethical claims, distinguishing between public and private issues, understanding cognitive dissonance and the need for order, or analyzing factual claims.

The plethora of strategies to increase citizens' decisionmaking skills and their potential for producing better decisions indicate the benefits such strategies might add to political citizenship education. Many of these ideas might be particularly helpful as guidelines in discussions among students when analyzing salient issues and alternative remedies. For instance, teaching students a framework to distinguish facts from opinions, to define terms, to identify underlying values and value standards upon which decisions are made, or to consider arguments from different viewpoints might enable rambling interactions to become more focused, purposeful, and useful.

It may also reduce tension that issue discussions naturally produce (Hahn, 1994).

Federalism as Central Organizing Concept

The final curriculum element recommended here, and added primarily to guide the interest group and electoral registration simulation as well as to situate learning for later application (Brandhorst, 1989, 1990; VanSickle & Hoge, 1991), is to teach political education using federalism as a central organizing concept. If a primary objective of political education is to promote political participation among young citizens, an analytic concept such as federalism would be useful to enable students to understand the connection between salient issues they identify, vote aggregation and electoral registration strategies, and other political information such as the media, political party organization, and the government entities responsible and accountable. These connections also provide a schema to assimilate political information in the future. For example, if students work to improve local road cycling paths, understanding federalism as an analytical concept would enable them to identify particular local election contests, media, party organizations, and government institutions which would have influence over such an issue area. A strategy to influence Medicare, on the other hand, would require students to organize their activities to effect different institutional actors, more national in character.

Several researchers have explored the usefulness of such a schema. VanSickle and Hoge (1991), for instance, described the different problem solving strategies that experts and novices applied to public problems. What enables the expert to solve problems better than a novice, according to these researchers, is the use of domain-specific schematic knowledge, or a "network of ideas" (pp. 155-156). Specifically, VanSickle and Hoge (1991) suggest that "[d]omain-

specific schemata...enable expert problem solvers to perceive what knowledge is needed to solve a problem and to access information they already possess in their long-term memories" (p. 156).

Before an expert can call forth information or a schemata to situate that information, however, he or she must be conscious of and remember that information (Brandhorst, 1989; 1990). And according to Husserl (cited in Brandhorst, 1989),"[t]he quintessential property of consciousness is intentionality", the purposefulness of an act (p. 198). Even when an individual has a clear sense of purpose, however, information processing and retention can be further distracted by "nonlogical stimuli" (information not useful for the purpose identified) or by meaningless words (Brandhorst, 1989). Thus, these cognitive realities require that the purposeful activity (in our case, political education for effective participation) be constructed to build on a students' natural inclination, which in turn would preclude other information (stimuli) from interfering with the intended learning or information processing (p. 205). Instruction constructed to accommodate the student's natural inclination would also enable information to be stored more readily in episodic memory (Brandhorst, 1990, p. 14).

These foregoing ideas lend support to using federalism as an organizing concept. Newmann (1975) identifies the psychological, ethical, and political needs students possess to have some control over their environment. Instruction directed towards political activities for effective participation may partially fulfill these needs. Furthermore, using federalism as a schema might enable students to process and retain better, political information related to effective political participation.

On the other hand, when students are treated to instruction which is directed toward memorizing information from a scholar's perspective or schemata or for the purpose of achieving

a high grade, the intentionality of learning is lost, since most students will not become political science researchers and achieving a high mark is not experientially related to future political participation. A discipline-centered political science course imposes another's intentionality on students. While the information processed may have a schemata, the schemata is not one that students use in their own real world experience nor is it based on student needs for the future. Moreover, information may not be stored for later use in semantic or episodic memory because it is not tied to "patterns and categories synthesized from experience (Brandhorst, 1990, p. 14). Having described the recommended elements of a revised political education, this paper now turns to the resources post secondary institutions can provide to implement these elements.

Post-secondary Institutions as Political Resource

Young students, and young voters in general, share characteristics which are correlated with nonvoting. One possible solution is to organize and register students in those electoral districts which provide them with the greatest potential for electoral influence. Since post-secondary educational institutions are natural aggregating places for young voters, political science activities which encompass simulated student organization and registration strategies at these institutions may be successful in helping this voter cohort overcome many of their political disadvantages. Moreover, post-secondary schools provide students with knowledgeable faculty in both substantive and political areas, and with libraries to accommodate public policy research. Institutional facilities such as student unions, student newspapers, and possibly most important of all in this model, access to computers and the internet service, and thus communication with other post-secondary institutions and student organizations, can produce benefits which ameliorate young voters' opportunities for success.

Interestingly, residential instability may aid students to maintain political influence. For example, student registration may be more appropriate at a parent's residence for one young voter but at a school address for another depending on the cohort's overall electoral strategy. When students, or student organization leaders, are taught to follow the electoral process and organize around educational institutions within particular electoral districts, they may optimize their voting behavior to meet group goals and increase their sense of political efficacy--raising their expectations for electoral success and thus their voting participation.

The theoretical model of organization and registration of young voter participation illustrated here relies heavily on students' estimations and expectations based on cohort organization across post-secondary institutions, electoral district focus based on issue analysis and government institutional responsibility, and the use of federalism as a central organizing concept. Simulated student organizing committees across institutions which are located within common regions along with information and coordinating committees at the county and Congressional level are suggested here to coordinate young voter registration optimization strategies.[5] Student leaders at institutions within counties will need to coordinate information and registration activities which enhance young voters' prospects for success at the polls and in public policy making. The following section provides an example data base to demonstrate the potential for student impact.

[5]Voter registration and precincts are organized at the county level. Individual counties house board of elections offices which are the central clearinghouse for electoral information at the local level.

Estimating Election Impact

Election data collected from all levels of government, and student institutional population data, provide evidence that if students at post-secondary educational institutions coordinate their registration and voting behavior around common goals and in targeted races they can affect Georgia election contests. Data on election contests at the federal, state, and local levels in Georgia's 1992 and 1994 elections were collected for this paper.[6] At the Congressional level, the absolute voting margins of victory for winning candidates in the eleven districts were calculated for the 1992 primary and general elections (see Appendix: Table 3). All University System of Georgia units and technical schools, and private post-secondary institutions exceeding 800 students were identified and categorized based on their location within the eleven Congressional districts. Student populations were aggregated and totalled across educational institutions within individual districts (see Appendix: Table 3). This same procedure was used to obtain data on the winning election margins for candidates and data for aggregated post-secondary institutional populations in statewide electoral contests (see Appendix: Table 3), General Assembly House and Senatorial races in the Metro Atlanta area including districts within Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton, Cobb, and Gwinnett Counties (see Appendix: Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7) and in local election contests in Athens-Clarke County (see Appendix: Table 8).

[6]The 1992 primary and general election and 1994 primary election data were provided in part by the Georgia Secretary of State's Board of Election's Office, Atlanta, Georgia, the Athens-Clarke County Board of Election's Office, and in The Almanac of American Politics, 1994, pp. 324-358. Information concerning Georgia post-secondary institutions, institutional student population sizes and locations was contained in The Georgia County Guide, 1993, pp. 71-73. Graphic presentations of the State of Georgia's Congressional and General Assembly Senatorial and House districts were provided by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Athens, Georgia.

Analyzing and comparing the winning vote margins within Georgia Congressional and Senate, State-wide, Metro Atlanta area Georgia General Assembly, and local Athens-Clarke County election races, in 1992 and 1994, and aggregated student population figures suggests that young voters when organized and only partially unified in purpose and voting participation can be the determining factor in many electoral contests. State-wide, even a meager student election turnout could have ousted the current incumbent governor in the 1994 general election as well as been the decisive factor in other state-wide contests. Governor Zell Miller, for instance, clinched his 1994 general election by a slim margin over a Republican Party candidate. Moreover, interest groups in Georgia can gain significant power because Georgia elections are becoming increasingly competitive with the growing popularity of the Republican Party. Student population, and thus eligible voters, at post-secondary institutions across the state total well over 300,000 (see Appendix: Table 3).

In all 11 Congressional districts, bloc voting among students could have resulted in the defeat of all current officeholders. This conclusion is based on students voting strategically in important close primary as well as general election contests.[7] Furthermore, in the 1994 Congressional primary races a unified student constituency could have altered the outcome in over half of these electoral contests. In the single other federal election in 1992--for the office of the junior Senator from Georgia--just over 17,000 student votes of the 308,188 total were needed to overcome the eventual winner.

[7]In over half of the 11 districts, less than 50% of students voting similarly was necessary to defeat the winner (either in primary or general elections); and in four of the 11 districts, less than 20% of unified student voter participation could have rejected the winning candidate.

A unified bloc of Metro Atlanta students may have altered the electoral outcomes in 11 of 22 Senatorial General Assembly 1992 primary contests. Many of these are the *de facto* elections for their respective offices since, as stated before, no opposition party fields a candidate. The same bloc of students may have been decisive in three of the general election contests.[8] In the Georgia General Assembly House contests, students could have been decisive in substantial numbers of Metro Atlanta electoral races: in DeKalb, 13 of 15; in Fulton, 13 of 18; in Clayton, 2 of 4; in Cobb, 8 of 9 (see Appendix: Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7).

Finally, in the 1990, 1992, and 1994 electoral races in Athens-Clarke County , only small percentages of united students voting in a bloc could have predominated in the contests for Chief

[8]Post-secondary institutions were categorized based on their location within the five Metro Atlanta counties mentioned earlier. Student population tallies were generated across institutions within each county and within the Metro region overall. Georgia General Assembly House districts were also totalled within each of the Metro counties, while Senate districts were totalled across the Metro area. For practical purposes, if a Senate or House district extended across counties, the district was categorized in the county in which it shared the greatest overlap. If the district extended to a county outside the Metro region, it was categorized in the Metro county in which it overlapped. Student population totals across institutions encompassed by the full Metro area were divided by the total number of Senatorial districts also included in the region (118,088/21: student population mean per Metro region Senate district--5,623, see Appendix: Table 7). For House districts, student population totals across institutions included in individual counties were divided by the total number of House districts encompassed, as defined earlier, within the same Metro counties (student population mean per individual House districts: Fulton--2,913 [52,440/18]; DeKalb--2,415 [36,238/15]; Clayton--1,216 [4,866/4]; Cobb--2,906 [19,861/9]; Gwinnett--468 [4,683/10]. The student population means for Metro Atlanta House and Senatorial districts were then compared to the margin of victory in their respective 1992 general and 1994 primary election contests (see Appendix: Tables 4 and 5). If the student population mean exceeded the margin of victory, students are said to be potentially the determining factor in electoral contests. The several limitations of this approach will be addressed later in the paper. Establishing the actual voting districts individual students reside in and aggregating their numbers may be the most important function the Georgia registration drive could perform for young voters in their organizational activities, thus increasing young voters' sense of individual as well as group political efficacy.

Elected Officer and county commissioners' offices (see Appendix: Table 8).

Theoretical, Methodological, and Practical Limitations

The author acknowledges several theoretical, methodological, and practical limitations to the curriculum elements suggested here and the conclusions drawn from this research. First, students at post-secondary educational institutions are not wholly within the 18 to 24 year old cohort.[9] In fact, student populations are inclusive of older age groups. Thus, the raw numbers counted as institutional student populations do not reflect the number of these less traditional students or their willingness to participate with younger voter students. Secondly, this model presupposes that students within this young cohort can agree on common political objectives which supersede other important issue concerns and vote in consonance with those goals in mind. Voting on the basis of issues would also have to contend with voting on the basis of party identification, philosophical or family orientation, or other political group affiliation (e.g., gender or race). These considerations, however, provide students with opportunities to apply political science to a simulation activity.

This curriculum strategy also presupposes that student leaders are willing to donate free time to organize and register their fellow students, inform students about salient public policy problems, survey their orientation towards these and other problems, and provide necessary research to inform their voting choices, coordinate media campaigns, keep track of electoral

[9]For instance, The University of Georgia enrolled over 28,000 students in 1992 and those in the 18-20 and 21-24 years old cohorts totalled 10,329 and 11,936 respectively. Adding the 2,808 students in the 25-29 bracket, young voters defined as less than 30 years of age contribute approximately 90% of total enrollment--still a substantial number of potential voters (The University of Georgia Fact Book: 1992, [1993], p. 57).

contests and candidate positions and actions once elected, and coordinate young voter electoral activities, though much of this activity could and should be part of the curriculum. Research (Fleishman, 1984; Hildreth, 1994; Klandermans, 1980) has demonstrated that the lack of material incentives for significant participation in political activity is not an insurmountable obstacle. Providing students with a simulation activity to organize committees within and across institutions may provide solidarity or purposive incentives to participating students (Hildreth, 1994, p. 447).

This model presupposes too that post-secondary institutions are willing to aid young voters in their organization efforts and that faculty will provide some assistance in promoting such activities--specifically, but not limited to, political science department faculty. Political science faculty develop specializations within their field, and this proposal may unduly distract them from their central research focus. Moreover, garnering and or maintaining university administrative support may be the most formidable hurdle since such activity is likely to be unwelcome by various university constituency groups and supporters. Political interest groups, outside the university --including those in the local community-- may also look with destain on such activity. Furthermore, faculty are not currently provided incentives to pursue teaching activities, may not believe that increased political participation is a desirable instructional goal, and may wish to avoid any potential political fallout or conflict that an applied political curriculum project might entail. Since communication among student organizations and coordinating committees across institutions, both within local areas as well as across the state, would be helpful, student access to post-secondary institutions' internet capabilities is necessary. Enlarging such capabilities is of significant import to the student organizing effort.

Finally, this interest group activity presupposes an average student population distribution across election districts. However, student residential statistics, including parents' home(s) and or school address are unavailable for research purposes; thus, an initial activity of student organizing committees and registration drives will be to elicit this information from students, then match residences with election districts and tabulate the results to optimize electoral strategies. Privacy issues may preclude efforts to require students to divulge such information, especially for the purpose of political organization, though having students reveal their addresses for other purposes (e.g., mailing final grades or graded papers) is not uncommon. Such information might be obtained from most if not all students for the purposes of this project, on a voluntary basis, even if students were given an opportunity to opt out and complete a commensurate activity.

Conclusion

Young voters share characteristics which political scientists demonstrate highly correlate with nonvoting behavior. Thus, it should come as little surprise that this cohort is the least likely to participate in elections. In an effort to increase political participation, the Georgia Secretary of State's Office conducted a registration drive and the federal government passed a voter registration law to increase voter turnout in the 1994 general election. Merely registering voters, however, may not stimulate other valuable political activity, including issue analysis and group consciousness raising and cooperation; it also may not increase eligible voters' feelings of political efficacy.

To improve effective political participation among young citizens, this paper suggests incorporating a project-based curricular strategy including interest group problem identification,

aggregation, organization, electoral registration and information collection and coordination strategies, using federalism as an organizing concept. The rationale for such an instructional strategy is based on theories and research in political science, sociology, and education. These theories and research efforts imply that this curricular strategy may contribute significantly to attempts to increase voter participation among Georgia citizens least likely to vote: 18 to 24 year olds, and to improve the quality of that participation. Implementing these curricular elements implies, however, that policy makers, political scientists, and teachers must recognize the import of political participation, and emphasize it as an important instructional objective. Nonetheless, two well known political scientists, Almond and Verba (cited in Wielhouwer, 1994), have suggested that low levels of political participation are not undesirable (p. 15). Unfortunately too for the curriculum recommended here, current policies in Georgia require only that students have minimal levels of competence in national and state political constitutions. This paper's author believes that current levels of political participation, interest, knowledge, and feelings of efficacy suggest that a revised curriculum to achieve quantitatively and qualitatively better democratic participation is warranted.

In brief, three sequential courses, or an increase in emphasis given to each in the current political science course, may enable students as a group to achieve a higher quantity and quality of political participation: an initial course or emphasis would encompass skills in and opportunities for issue identification, analysis, and consensus building; a second course or emphasis would cover topics related to group organization, processes, and electoral activities; and finally, a third course or emphasis, would review democratic values and structures upon which American government was founded. The last requirement would have students evaluate

their positions on issues in light of democratic ideals and practices. Considering the costs or time involved with adding and requiring students to complete more courses, common core courses in English or history could be used to partially address different facets of these elements, or all core courses might be required to integrate a section on issues analysis and evaluation, critical thinking, and or values clarification (Newmann, Bertocci, & Landsness, 1977).

Students would complete a final project encompassing three tasks: first, discuss orally and in writing problems considered and solutions offered, including pros and cons, underlying values, and projected outcomes; second, plan an electoral strategy based on maximizing group influence, on a survey of past election data, and on an understanding of formal and informal political institutions (e.g., government institutions and principles, media, political parties), and the use of federalism as a central organizing concept; and third, discuss political issues in terms of democratic values.

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